

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (currently amended) A method for tuning a laser, comprising the steps of:
positioning a gas cell containing gas with individual vibrational-rotation line spectra
inside a tunable laser cavity having a resonance wavelength; and
employing a coarse wavelength tuning means to position the cavity resonance
wavelength between adjacent absorption lines of said gas; and
~~whereby operating said laser operates at an absorption minimum that occurs between said~~
absorption lines;
whereby the laser wavelength is locked to an absolute wavelength defined by the gas;
whereby maximum absorption bands in said gas act as filters for laser wavelength output;
and

whereby said laser does not require means for fine wavelength tuning.

2. (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of using an external
tuning means to tune the laser to within a few nanometers of the minimum absorption
wavelength so that it lases at the minimum spectral absorption lines where said laser cavity has
maximum gain.

3. (currently amended) A method for tuning a laser that does not require means for fine
wavelength tuning, comprising the steps of:

positioning a gas cell containing gas with individual vibrational-rotation line spectra
outside a tunable laser cavity having a resonance wavelength; and

positioning the cavity resonance wavelength between adjacent absorption lines of said
gas; and

~~whereby operating said laser operates at an absorption minimum that occurs between said~~
absorption lines; and

whereby the laser wavelength is locked to an absolute wavelength defined by the gas.

4. (original) The method of claim 3, wherein the step of positioning the cavity resonance
wavelength between adjacent absorption lines of said gas includes using coarse wavelength
tuning means.

5. (original) The method of claim 4, further comprising the step of using an external tuning means to tune the laser to within a few nanometers of the minimum absorption wavelength so that it lases at the minimum spectral absorption lines where said laser cavity has maximum gain.

6-13. (canceled).